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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

February 23, 2005

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The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
H218 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Lewis:

Congratulations on your ascension to Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. I look forward to working with you on many issues of importance to our nation in the coming year.

I am writing today in support of federal resources to assist law enforcement personnel charged with combating the illegal drug epidemic that is rampant in communities throughout eastern, central and southern Oregon. Nowhere is the need for federal anti-drug resources more pronounced than in rural areas like Oregon's Second Congressional District, where entire communities struggle to cope with the proliferation of illegal substances and their devastating effects on families and communities.

Federal resources through the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program and Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program, which is now encapsulated in the Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program, provide a needed burst of funding for law enforcement officials who often do not have the resources available locally to adequately police the individuals and organizations responsible for the drug trade in their area. HIDTA received \$228.4 million and Byrne Grants received \$634 million in the FY 2005 Omnibus Appropriations Bill. I respectfully request that funding for these important programs be increased in FY 2006 to reinforce law enforcement efforts in Oregon and throughout the nation.

According to an assessment recently conducted by the Oregon HIDTA office, reducing funding for these programs would reduce interagency cooperation and intelligence sharing between local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. The assessment also found that operations by local taskforces on the front lines in the fight against illegal drugs would decrease by 25 to 75 percent. Without funds received from the HIDTA and JAG programs, many local taskforces in Oregon would have to severely curtail operations, reduce staffing levels or even cease operations completely. Given the threat posed to children, families and communities by illegal drugs, these efforts to control the drug problem must continue.

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I am particularly troubled by the rise in production, trafficking and use of methamphetamine in Oregon's Second District, which, despite being home to only 20 percent of the population, had 35 percent of the state's meth lab seizures in 2004. This fact is particularly alarming given that law enforcement agencies in rural areas like the Second District have fewer resources available to locate and capture meth labs and investigate and apprehend the organizations and individuals responsible for production and distribution of the drug.

To learn more about counter-drug efforts already underway and to raise awareness among community members, I am currently conducting a series of seven community forums focused on production, distribution and abuse of illegal drugs, particularly methamphetamine, throughout the Second District. As I travel from community to community I am heartened by the valiant efforts being undertaken by community members and organizations including counter-drug task forces, law enforcement, family service agencies and treatment and prevention organizations, but I am also becoming more and more convinced that to properly address the scourge of meth in our communities, more federal resources will need to be brought to bear.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request. I look forward to working with you throughout the appropriations cycle to ensure that those undertaking this important work in our communities continue to receive adequate resources to fight drug production, trafficking and abuse. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Best regards,



Greg Walden
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Frank Wolf
The Honorable Joe Knollenberg